

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Summary of the October 13, 2010 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA.

### **1. Introductions** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

Laura Wiener, Chair and representative of Arlington, called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

### **2. Chair's Report** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

The Chair passed out a sign-up sheet for the Advisory Council's committees. She encouraged members to participate in the committees.

### **3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes of September 15, 2010** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

A motion to approve the draft minutes of September 15, 2010 was made and seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

### **4. Presentation on the Massachusetts Statewide Airport Systems Plan** – *Steven Rawding, MassDOT Aeronautics*

S. Rawding updated members on the development of the Statewide Airport Systems Plan. The Plan focuses on the state's 37 public use airports other than Logan International Airport in Boston and Hanscom Field in Bedford, which are owned by Massport.

The MassDOT Aeronautics division is one of the four divisions of MassDOT. They oversee and regulate the public use airports, and work together with the owners of the airports and the Federal Aviation Administration to maintain and improve them.

The project management team includes the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, the Massachusetts Airport Managers Association, the Massachusetts Office of Business Management, Massport, the MassDOT, the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Business Aircraft Association, the Airline Transportation Association, and Regional Airline Association.

The purpose of the Plan is to provide a blueprint to make sure the airports meet the state's transportation and economic needs. The Plan's vision is to "provide a safe and efficient airport system that accommodates demand, supports economic and transportation needs, and maximizes funding resources." Attainment of the Plan's vision and goals will be tracked through performance measures.

The finished product should be available early in January, 2011. Materials, such as draft chapters of the Plan, are available at [www.eot.state.ma.us/airportplan](http://www.eot.state.ma.us/airportplan). Members were encouraged to visit the site and provide comments.

### **Member Questions**

In response to members' questions, S. Rawding made the following additional comments:

- Freight rail connections to the airports are not being studied through the Plan. Most freight is handled at Logan International Airport.
- The condition of airport infrastructure is an important issue that the Plan addresses. The Plan also considers how the airports affect the environment and the local economies of the areas they serve.
- General aviation airports support businesses, passengers, flight training, medical flights, traffic reporting, law enforcement, and agriculture.
- The Plan has not identified any projects for the Boston Region MPO to support. The Plan is mostly concerned with the actual airports, rather than access to them.
- Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vinyard are large growth areas for aviation.
- Other airports in the Boston region include Beverly and Norwood. Beverly handles some corporate business traffic. Other nearby airports include Lawrence, Plymouth, Taunton, and Mansfield.

### **5. Report on Topics to be Discussed During the Boston Region MPO's Memorandum of Understanding Revisions – *Laura Wiener, Chair***

L. Wiener briefed members on the process to update the MPO's Memorandum of Understanding. One topic has been MassDOT's role within the organization. Questions include:

- How many seats should they hold?
- What should happen to the seat formerly held by the Turnpike Authority?
- Should they automatically be the Chair or should that office be elected?

Other topics that have come up include project selection criteria and the number of municipalities on the MPO.

Steve Olanoff, Vice Chair and representative of Westwood, went over the letter distributed to members that summarizes the Advisory Council's concerns. One concern is that not all municipalities in the region can run in each MPO election. Currently rules that are in place to ensure geographical equity prevent some towns and cities from running. For instance, currently the towns of Brookline, Belmont, and Arlington cannot join the MPO because the Inner Core seats are held by cities: Newton and Somerville.

S. Olanoff also discussed the former Turnpike Authority's seat on the MPO. They are no longer an entity. It has been suggested that the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs or the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development should be invited to join the MPO in lieu of the former Turnpike Authority.

S. Olanoff also raised the following questions for the MOU revision:

- Should there be more towns or cities on the MPO?

- Should a simple majority be required to approve any motion?

L. Wiener added that the Advisory Council has a vote on the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee, but not the MPO. It should have a vote on both.

### **Member Questions and Comments**

- Will the MPO establish a committee to develop the new MOU? (Richard Canale, MAGIC). L. Wiener said there will not be a committee. The entire Transportation Planning and Programming Committee is discussing it.
- R. Canale and Marcy Crowley argued during the last MOU revision for an Advisory Council seat at the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. The Advisory Council does not have a vote on the MPO because the Advisory Council's role is to provide guidance to the MPO. It was not thought to be appropriate for the Advisory Council to be a member of the body it was advising. The same rationale justifies why MPO members are not voting members of the Advisory Council. However, this should be revisited. (R. Canale)
- The regional planning agency (RPA) in the Boston region, MAPC, has a smaller role in transportation planning than other RPAs because of the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS). CTPS supports the MPO, but also does work for the MassDOT. Staff advice should serve the needs of the MPO and should not be compromised by a close relationship with the state. The Advisory Council suggested during the last MOU revision that MAPC play a greater role in the MPO transportation planning. (R. Canale)
- The MPO boundaries should be examined. (Frank DeMasi, Wellesley)
- The Advisory Council's concerns should be converted from questions to strong recommendations. (F. DeMasi)
- Should MassDOT have veto power? They control multiple votes. (R. Canale)
- It will always be difficult to find an appropriate balance of towns and cities on the MPO. All 101 are vying for preeminence. (Chan Rogers, SWAP)
- Does the balance of towns and cities matter? The form of government does not matter. Perhaps population should be the important variable. For instance, there could be three small municipalities, three medium municipalities, and three large municipalities. (Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects)
- Project prioritization is an important consideration. Projects should be scored. That would make it clear why projects are selected. (Tony Centore, Medfield)
- Expanding the MPO boundaries was considered previously but not implemented. However, the adjoining MPOs have representation on the Advisory Council to coordinate their work with the Boston Region MPO. (R. Canale)

L. Wiener said she will update members at each Advisory Council meeting as the MOU is revised. The MPO is waiting for comments from the federal certification review before further discussing the MOU.

**6. Discussion of the Advisory Council's Draft Comment Letter on the Draft State Rail Plan – Laura Wiener, Chair; and Walter Bonin and Frank DeMasi, Co-Chairs of the Advisory Council's Freight Committee**

L. Wiener said the Freight Committee discussed the draft State Rail Plan and wrote a comment letter. A letter should come from the full Advisory Council rather than just the Freight Committee. The Advisory Council is the body that comments. Staff worked with her to write the draft Advisory Council letter that was distributed to the membership.

W. Bonin said the Advisory Council letter includes most of the key comments the Freight Committee would like to convey to the MassDOT. The Freight Committee thinks implementing the recommendations of the Plan is the key challenge. The Rail Plan is needed to implement the state's environmental and economic development goals. The Freight Committee plans to support and encourage implementation of the Rail Plan.

F. DeMasi said the Freight Committee would like elements of the draft Rail Plan incorporated into the MPO's Regional Transportation Plan. Some of the projects recommended by the Rail Plan should be programmed in the Transportation Improvement Program. Passenger rail has a seat at the MPO through the MBTA. There is not sufficient representation of freight needs at the MPO.

**Comments**

- There was not enough public outreach. There was only one public meeting in Worcester. The public outreach should start over. (Jo Hart, resident of Worcester)
- The Freight Study and the Rail Plan are different. The Freight Study is a component of the draft Rail Plan, but had no comment period. (F. DeMasi)
- The Freight Study includes all modes. The draft Rail Plan includes passenger and freight rail. The Rail Plan is a federal requirement. (S. Olanoff)
- One problem is that documents do not always match up. One project is treated as important in one document, but not in another. There is not enough consistency between the documents. Also, there should have been a public meeting in Boston. (John Businger, National Corridors Initiative)

L. Wiener suggested amending the letter to express concern that the public outreach was not sufficient. J. Businger concurred.

J. Businger made a motion to approve the letter as amended and it was seconded by T. Centore. It was approved unanimously.

**7. Committee Reports**

There were none.

**8. Announcements**

There is a proposal to extend MBTA commuter rail to Foxborough. This would also have benefits for freight rail. The MBTA is holding a public meeting soon. (F. DeMasi)

The National Corridors Initiative is concerned about New Jersey Transit's planned Access to the Region's Core (ARC) Hudson River tunnel. The tunnel, as planned, will not connect to Penn Station, which is where Amtrak's Northeast Corridor trains stop in New York City. New England states should advocate for a connection to Penn Station because a problem with the Northeast Corridor's Hudson River tunnel would disrupt Amtrak service to New England. It is illustrative of the fact that projects seemingly far away can have a big impact in the Boston region. (J. Businger)

## **9. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 PM.

### **Attachments:**

Attendance List for October 13, 2010

**ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for October 13, 2010**

***Cities and Towns***

Lauren Rosenzweig Morton, Acton  
Laura Wiener, Arlington  
Tom Kadzis, Boston  
Walter Bonin, Marlborough  
Tony Centore, Medfield  
Dom D'Eramo, Millis  
Kurt Mullen, Needham  
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley  
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

***Agencies***

Tad Read, Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Steven Rawding, MassDOT – Aeronautics Division  
Karen Pearson, MassDOT  
Leon Papadopoulos, MassRIDES  
Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC)  
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP)

***Citizen Groups***

Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects  
Chris Anzuoni, Massachusetts Bus Association  
John Businger, National Corridors Initiative  
Tom O'Rourke, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce

***Guests and Visitors***

Jo Hart, Worcester resident  
Ed Lowney, Malden resident  
Pamela Mann, Go-21  
Ken Patrick, Plymouth resident

***MPO Staff***

Walter Bennett  
Mike Callahan